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FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

Written statement submitted by the International Educational Development, a non-governmental organization on the Roster

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is distributed in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[18 August 1993]

Freedom of movement

1. International Educational Development is aware that freedom of movement is very seriously impaired because of the exigencies of war in violent conditions.

2. For example, the Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh is an area under military occupation. Nearly half the Bangladeshi armed forces are in the area, including paramilitary and other security forces. The original inhabitants, the Jumas, have been moved into specially designed villages, while their lands have been given to plains people brought into the Chittagong Hill Tracts by a government policy of transmigration. Gross human rights violations, arbitrary arrest and mass killing of the indigenous Jumma continue to be reported by Amnesty International and other human rights

organizations. As a result of the terrible situation, over 57,000 refugees are in India. The Indian Government has very kindly looked after them all those years, but there is a recent accord to repatriate the refugees. There are fears that essential supplies, such as food and medicine, will be decreased. The refugee camps already have cholera, malaria and other epidemic medical problems. They apparently agree to return if that return is carried out under the auspices of the international community and if they are guaranteed restitution of their lands.

3. The former Yugoslavia provides useful illustration too, because the Serbian army and paramilitary units force the people of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina to flee. Serbian paramilitary units have forced 45,000 Hungarians and almost 20,000 Croatians from their homes in Voivodina. In Croatia itself the situation is complicated by more than 527,000 refugees with no place to go. They would like to return to their homes in the zones under UNPROFOR control, but it is not possible. UNPROFOR did not respond in timely fashion. The following information describes this.

4. According to statistical data issued on 7 July 1993, the Republic of Croatia is caring for 248,806 displaced persons and for 275,433 refugees, a total of 524,239 people. Therefore, Croatia has on its free territory (where 4.2 million inhabitants were living before the start of the war) 12.5 per cent of its people with displaced persons or refugee status. A total of 110,262 displaced persons and refugees are being cared for in 414 centres for displaced persons and refugees in B category hotels, workers vacation centres, former Yugoslav army military barracks that have been renovated and the newly built displaced persons/refugee settlements. Over 400,000 displaced persons and refugees are accommodated with host families of Croatian citizens.

5. At the same time, Croatia is still under Serbian aggression. Twenty-six per cent of its territory is occupied. Croatia, apart from its displaced persons and refugees, has around 253,000 unemployed, 800,000 pensioners and 150,000-180,000 living below the poverty level. During the war and occupation of Croatia 13,788 persons disappeared, 23,824 were wounded, 6,592 were killed (their families are being looked after by the Croatian Government).

6. The aid that arrived in Croatia during 1992 (250,000 tonnes) was not sufficient to cover the needs of displaced persons and refugees in food, shoes, clothing, hygienic items, etc. During last year, only 60 per cent of the general needs of displaced persons and refugees were covered. This year this percentage has been greatly reduced (to 35 per cent) due to either reduced humanitarian aid or because help has been redirected, mainly to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

7. A significant portion of humanitarian aid is provided by the European Community. Through its programmes displaced persons and refugees receive flour, canned meat, pasta, powdered milk, yeast, canned fish, cheese, salt, sugar, canned tomatoes. This programme will provide a total of 11,000 tonnes of food. Through an earlier programme 34,000 tonnes of food was distributed to displaced persons and refugees.

8. Croatia clearly needs humanitarian aid from the international community. As the result of fighting in central Bosnia, between 500 and 1,000 new refugees arrive into Croatia. The increased number of displaced persons and refugees has exhausted not only the economy of Croatia but also the Croatian people, who have been caring and are still caring for 400,000 displaced persons and refugees. At the same time severe social and security conditions exist in cities like Zadar, Gospic, Biograd and Sibenik due to continued shelling by Serbian forces from the areas protected by UNPROFOR. Therefore, it would be unrealistic to expect Croatia to take care of such a large number of refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina.

9. If the international community does not take steps to relieve the current problem resulting from the war, the refugee crisis could be further worsened.